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The Interplay of Health, Pleasure and Wellness in British Seaside Resorts: the Case of Skegness on the Lincolnshire Coast

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Mohamed Chamekh

Introduction

Water has been used as a source of therapy for centuries especially at times when old medicine was not effective as a cure for all ailments. Greek doctors started as early as 460 B.C. to 370 B. C. to recommend baths in waters high in Sulphur to treat diseases. The Romans used balneotherapy¹ for the treatment of diseases,² and it was under the latter that baths were widely used for therapeutic purposes.

In Britain, the inland spas were the first health resorts. They were a destination for invalids to drink the waters of the springs. Bath was the most prominent inland health resort which appeared in Roman Britain. From the late sixteenth century, Bath started to attract health seekers and became the leading spa resort in Britain.³ Within the same tradition, other inland resorts like Cheltenham, Buxton, Harrogate, Tunbridge Wells and Woodhall joined Bath as health destinations.

In France, water was used for treatment even in colonies. Colonies like Tunisia, Madagascar and Guadeloupe were sites of mineral spas which were appropriated by colonists for their use as sites to treat colonial diseases while Vichy, a spa town in France, was used for cleansing from colonial diseases and the re-integration into French civilisation.⁴

However, the way waters were used and the type of waters saw constant changes. These changes were concomitant with changes in medical terminology that characterised the use of waters for therapeutic purposes. In this regard, terms like aqua therapy, balneology, hydropathy, etc. appeared in response to changes in the use of waters for treatment.

A major change was the use of seawaters for the treatment of diseases as many from the medical profession started to encourage their patients to visit seaside resorts for the treatment of diseases. Whole towns developed in response to an expanding number of visitors who took the waters in the quest of good health. In this regard, it needs to be mentioned that the growth of the seaside health resort was part of an overall context which considered nature as “*curative*”.⁵

Another aspect of the use of the seaside for health treatment was hydropathy which developed in the nineteenth century as an aspect of health establishments in seaside resorts. There were hydropathic institutes in many British seaside resorts where visitors stayed in metal rooms with compressed air. This air was meant to boost the oxygen levels in the body and at the same time clear “*the air passages*”.⁶

The importance of seaside resorts for a better health was partly driven by a growing stress on lifestyles and climates as factors contributing to health. This tendency was strengthened by an all-inclusive health strategy adopted by the Ministry of Health, established in 1919, which sought to combine preventive medicine, lifestyles, and better health care provision to improve the health of British citizens.⁷

British seaside health resorts have been the focus of seaside resort history⁸ and partly tourism history⁹, but their mention as sites for treatment was in the context of seaside history rather than a detailed analysis of the evolution of these resorts as sites for the health improvement or maintenance apart from few studies like Gilbert (1939), who focused on the economic and the demographic development of coastal and inland health resorts¹⁰ or Hassan (2003) whose focus was not on the seaside resort as a site of health per se, rather Hassan dealt with the seaside environment in general including recreation, pollution, the socio-economic factors influencing the development of seaside resorts, and the seaside resorts as a liminal space.¹¹ However, the development or the prospective development of British seaside resorts as sites of wellness or as sites for the improvement of the “*quality of life*”¹² remains understudied.¹³ This is highly relevant especially with the growing concerns over the health needs of an ageing population and the challenges that should pose to the resources of the NHS and the constant decline of British seaside resorts as holiday destinations.

This article seeks to address the following questions: how did Skegness, a British seaside resort, develop into a health seaside resort? Why did it change into a working-class playground? And especially: is it possible for Skegness to develop into a wellness, which in turn would reduce the strain on the NHS if the British population were healthier?

The growth of Skegness into a health resort

The development of Skegness into a health resort was mainly premised on the importance of seaside waters for treatment. Skegness waters were recommended to relieve different disease conditions. Lord Dawson of Penn, a royal physician, considered Skegness to be “*the healthiest place in England*” when recommending it to a patient from

Nottingham.¹⁴ The accompanying text to an advertising poster in the Skegness local library, dating back to 1880, lauded this resort as healthy and salubrious with perfect sanitary arrangements and unequalled water quality.

The health dimension of seaside waters was not specific to Skegness, but was common for all seaside locations. From the middle of the eighteenth century doctors started advising their patients to visit the seaside for health purposes.¹⁵ Being beside the seaside, plunging into the sea, walking by its side or drinking its waters were considered of health recuperative values.¹⁶ Seaside resorts took over the role of the inland spas like Bath, Harrogate, Tunbridge, Epsom, Scarborough, and Buxton. Hence, the bathing practices in the early seaside bathing places followed similar practices as those in the inland spas. Bathers were, for example, dipped in sea waters for health recuperative purposes, a practice which was common in inland watering places.¹⁷ Resorts were considered by Rob Shields (1988) in this era as “clinics”, and he labelled Brighton between 1730 and 1820 as “clinic Brighton”.¹⁸

The use of seaside waters for therapeutic purposes was strengthened with Dr Richard Russell’s recommendation of the use of seawater for the same purposes as the inland spa. In 1747, he published *De Tabie Glandulari*, which was translated as *A Dissertation concerning the use of Sea-Water in diseases of the glands*, in which he recommended the use of seawater for the treatment of consumption, cirrhosis, leprosy, gonorrhoea, scurvy, languor, epilepsy and so on. Dr. Russell, for example, recommended to one of his patients drinking “half a pint of sea water every morning at five of the clock”. At the same time, he considered cold sea bathing a prerequisite for a “great quiet of body and mind” and advised patients to drink a glass of sea water immediately after coming out of the sea.¹⁹

Dr. Russell’s *Dissertation* played a significant role in the spread of the cult of sea bathing for therapy purposes and henceforth the growth of seaside resorts to the extent that he was considered “the father of all seaside watering places”.²⁰ Many places in Brighton bear the name of Dr. Russell (Russell Street, Russell Square, Russell Place) in recognition of the role he played in the growth of this seaside resort. Russell used for example to recommend Brighton for his patients when he was a practicing physician at Lewes.²¹ It was in this era that the sea water of Brighton was bottled and sold as medicine in London.²²

Sea bathing soon became a health vogue which gained momentum with the visits of members of the royal families to the seaside for medical treatment. Acting on the advice of his physicians, the Prince of Wales, for example, visited Brighton in 1783 for the treatment of his glands.²³ Similarly, the recovery of George III from a supposed attack of insanity was accompanied in 1789 with a long stay in Weymouth.²⁴

Skegness followed the same developmental lines of the seaside resorts in England. It was referred to in early *Directories* as a bathing place frequently visited by people for health purposes.²⁵ Stress was laid in most of these *Directories* on the importance of Skegness as a bathing place and its health qualities. Skegness was visited by the local gentry and respectable families who used to stay in Skegness for “sometime”²⁶ mainly for health purposes. For this purpose, bathing machines were stationed in Skegness. These machines were meant to hide the body of the bather from observation and give the bather the chance to enjoy the pleasure of a plunge in sea waters, but in a way which ‘protect[ed] modesty’ and did not violate the norms of public decency.²⁷ These machines were mentioned in Skegness in William White’s 1842 *History Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire*,²⁸ but they existed earlier.²⁹ Similarly, Avery’s *Penny popular guide to Skegness* (1884) pointed to forty bathing machines which were stationed on the beach of Skegness.

³⁰ The presence of these machines in Skegness showed to a certain extent that the visitors to Skegness used to follow the norms of order, decency and respectability and a plunge in sea waters, sea air and a gaze at the sea were the major attractions of Skegness.

As a health resort, Skegness saw the expansion convalescent homes specifically for its recuperative health qualities. *The Hampshire advertiser* referred in 1885 to Lady Scarborough's orders for the building of a convalescent home on her son's estate for children in Skegness.³¹ The 1900 *Kelly's Directory* pointed to the Nottingham and Notts Convalescent Home for Men at Seathorne and a similar one for women at Castle Donington,³² and *Dutton's Directory of Skegness* (1934) referred to the Derbyshire Miners and Friendly Societies Home, which was established by the Miners' Welfare Fund in 1926, Nottingham Poor Girls Camp Society, Lady Scarborough Convalescent Home, National Deposit Friendly Society, and the Lewison Convalescent Home, and Boots Convalescent Home.³³ The frequent reference to convalescent homes in Skegness showed the image Skegness accrued as a health resort and a major destination for health seekers.

The growth of Skegness as a health resort was clear in holiday guidebooks of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Avery's 1889, 1894, and 1898 *Guidebooks* of Skegness stressed the importance of Skegness for health. His 1889 and 1894 *Guidebooks* pointed to the fact that Skegness was "a health- restoring place".³⁴

In addition to the sea waters, the drinkable water of Skegness was considered of organic purity and of "first class quality".³⁵ The quality of water and the installation of an efficient sewage system made all conditions in Skegness "favourable for healthfulness".³⁶ While highlighting both the quality of water and the drainage system in Skegness, *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* (1880) wrote:

Skegness is provided with two very important elements, viewed from a sanitary point of view, so essential to the wellbeing of any town, and particularly one of this description to which thousands annually resort for the purpose of recruiting health.³⁷

These aspects (sanitary arrangements and the quality of water) were stressed in other newspapers of the 1880s,³⁸ something which could be explained by the importance of the quality of water and the sanitary arrangements in all ages for health.

The focus on health continued in the first half of the twentieth century. The publisher of *Picturesque Skegness* (C 1900) considered Skegness a "well established seaside health resort".³⁹ Similarly, the opening pages of the *Guide to Skegness and Wainfleet* (1925) referred to "invalids and persons seeking health" as among the frequent visitors to Skegness.⁴⁰ The importance of Skegness as a health resort was brought to the limelight through a conference on "Healthy Holidays for the Worker", which was held in Skegness in 1937. Speakers at this conference underlined the health restorative values of seaside health resorts. Dr. R. Cove, for example stressed the effectiveness of sea bathing for the promotion of a "healthy vascular coordination". Similarly, Dame Louise McIlroy addressed the conference on the treatment of gynaecological affections at seaside health resorts.⁴¹ The organisation of this conference in Skegness showed the continuing importance of Skegness as a health seaside resort at least till the late 1930s.

Healthy air of Skegness (1840-1970s)

In addition to the waters of Skegness, the air of Skegness was considered of health recuperative values. A visitor to Skegness described the healing qualities of the Skegness air as follows:

Farewell, wide expanded ocean,
Boundless source of calm delight
All thy breezes health inspiring
Lent new vigour to this frame.⁴²

This poem illustrates the way visitors considered their journey to Skegness in the early nineteenth century. A journey which was both therapeutic and at the same time a source of re-invigoration. Similarly, While referring to the health qualities of Skegness air, the holiday correspondent of the *Standard* (1885) stated that it “*must be pronounced bracing enough to satisfy the most robust invalid*”.⁴³ In addition, while describing the elements that made Skegness a health seaside resort, the 1889 *Avery Guidebook* considered Skegness air to be one vital aspect of these.⁴⁴ The same element was described in the 1894 *Guidebook* as ‘so pure’ and contained a large amount of ozone, which was seen as a “*mysterious health giving element*”.⁴⁵ The same feature was stressed in *Seaside Watering Places* (2/6) (1888). “*Skegness has*”, according to this guidebook of seaside health resorts in England and Wales, “*what is infinitely more essential to invalids and seekers after quiet and health in its bracing air and salubrious ozone laden atmosphere*”.⁴⁶ The *dictionary of Watering places* (1881) gave a similar depiction of the Skegness air.⁴⁷

The air of Skegness was further stressed with the decline of confidence in the importance of sea waters for treatment. According to the 1926 *Skegness Holiday Guide*, if you wanted relief from asthma, bronchial complaints, or neurosis, visiting Skegness would be the solution.⁴⁸ “*After a few days*” of visiting the resort, the *Skegness Official Guide Book* (1926) stated, “*the bracing air and atmosphere relieves [sic] those sudden paroxysms of difficult breathing, and the tightness of the chest diminishes*”.⁴⁹ The writer of this *Guide Book* (1926) pointed to his own experience with Skegness, presenting a testimony to the fact that he visited Skegness when he suffered from glands and he was relieved after a short stay there. He stated that ‘the supreme thing about the place remains the quality of its air. The best advertisement for this Lincolnshire resort would be to put a taste of atmosphere in small liqueur bottle... The most anaemic city clerk, after a sniff at that bottle would feel capable of getting up and hitting Dempsey.’⁵⁰

In a similar vein, the cover page of the *Skegness Holiday Guide* of 1931-32 was full of references to the healthfulness of Skegness. It pointed to Skegness as the “*Home of Health*” and described the place as “*bonny*” and “*bracing*”. A brief search for the meaning of both words in the *Oxford English Dictionary* shows an association between these two and health.

Skegness continued to be classified as a health resort in the 1930s. In this context, *The Times* section on weather continued to refer to Skegness as health resort in the 1930s,⁵¹ and the 1936-1937 *Holiday Guide Book* called on “*busy longshoremen*” and shipmates to benefit from the weather of Skegness for invigoration, freshness and fitness.⁵²

The stress on the bracing air of Skegness, but to a lesser extent its healing qualities, continued in the second half of the twentieth century.⁵³ This could be explained by the fact that this ‘commodity’ was abstract and hence did not require on-the-ground expenditure. The focus on sea air, as an aspect of the health bringing qualities of seaside

resorts, was, according to John Beckerson and John K. Walton (2005), “*accessible, free and pleasant*”.⁵⁴ It could also be explained by a continuation on the stress on health and healing as major attractions of this holiday destination.⁵⁵ However, with the inflow of working class excursionists and especially during the golden years of mass tourism, Skegness changed from a health seaside into a working class playground.

A working-class playground

Skegness, despite the continuing emphasis on its healthy climes, changed into a working-class playground. The railway led to gradual change in the social constituency of the visitors to Skegness by bringing the industrial workers from the East Midlands, Yorkshire, and London.⁵⁶ This type of visitors started to gradually replace the existing ‘well to do’ visitors.⁵⁷ The extension of the railway to Skegness on July 28, 1873 served as a catalyst for this change, especially as this date was convenient for workers to visit Skegness because it was followed by the August Bank Holiday (the first Monday of August), from Lubbock’s Act of 1871, entitling workers to a day’s holiday.

Railway Excursions to Skegness coincided with the second and third phases of railway excursions to resorts, which were respectively in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s.⁵⁸ In comparison with the first phase (in the 1840’s), in which the working class holidays were still in their formative stages and the number of trippers was small, the last two had a serious impact on resorts because the demand for working class holidays was higher.⁵⁹

Benefitting from the railway nominal fares (3 shilling),⁶⁰ and the rise in real wages in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, workers arrived in special trains from Lincoln, Nottingham, Derby, London (King’s Cross) and East Midlands industrial towns in general. In Lincoln, workers made use of their foundry trips holiday, a four day holiday at the end of July granted by employers to foundry workers to improve their performance, and organised railway trips to Skegness and other resorts on the East Coast.⁶¹ To benefit from this holiday, workers in Lincoln, and in other parts of England, got involved in saving schemes through Friendly Societies, Mechanics’ Institutes, Sick and Dividing Clubs, saving schemes at work, political groups and even in streets.⁶²

A comparison between the early railway excursions, which were organised to exhibitions by working class organisations like the Mechanics’ Institutes and Friendly Societies, and those organised by railway companies to the seaside revealed a major difference in the purpose of each. While the organisers of the former were motivated by the improvement of the health, the culture and the personal improvement of the worker through rational recreation,⁶³ the latter were mainly driven by profit.⁶⁴

The sheer number of excursionists to Skegness and their socio-economic profile led to the change of the social outlook and the tone of this seaside resort. Describing the excursionists from Lincoln, mainly the foundry workers who used to frequent the Lincolnshire resorts (Skegness, Cleethorpes and Mablethorpe), Lorna Nicholls (1978) stated that they were “weary people from the smoke-laden air of the streets of the city and the mean little houses which clustered around the foundries”.⁶⁵ The change in the socio-economic profile of the visitors to Skegness was clear in the behaviour of the ‘new’ visitors. This led to the ‘departure’ of the long staying middle class families, especially those who looked for health and especially relaxation and quietude, in search of select seaside resorts, especially as the social mores brought by the working class visitors conflicted with norms of respectability and gentility that made many of these families

choose Skegness for a holiday before the arrival of the railways. This was the case with all seaside resorts which were accessible in terms of money and fares to the workers of industrial towns.⁶⁶ In Brighton, for example, Queen Victoria did not return after 1843 when she found that its inhabitants had become “very indiscreet and noisy”.⁶⁷ The middle class left later to quieter resorts in search of “health-giving pleasure”.⁶⁸

The change of the socio-economic profile of the visitors to Skegness led to a class conflict between those seeking health giving recreations and a wide section of the working class who sought to fully exploit their free time regardless of health or rational recreation. Being temporarily freed from the factory discipline, workers used to sing, dance, and specially drink until late. In this context, it seems relevant to point to a study by Dingle (1972) on “Drink and working-class living standards in Britain, 1870-1914” which coincided with the era of the excursion trains to Skegness. Dingle found that workers in this era spent most of their money on beer and spirits consumption. Dingle considered workers not morally prepared for the pay hikes and leisure time⁶⁹ as the brief liberation of the workers from factories led to their indulgence in drinking and ‘noise and bustle’ in general.⁷⁰ This issue continued in the first half of the twentieth century, something which made police superintendents in some resorts enlist the help of the licensees so as to reduce drunkenness and maintain order.⁷¹ Murray’s *Handbook for Lincolnshire* (1890) described Skegness after the invasion of trippers from Lincoln, Nottingham, and Derby as “the noisiest and most crowded of the Lincolnshire seaside places, except Cleethorpes” and concluded with the fact that it was not recommended for “quieter visitors”.⁷² Similarly, a local newspaper likened Skegness after the visits of masses of excursionists to Skegness in the August Bank Holidays of 1882 to Egypt after an invasion of locusts.⁷³ These years saw the gradual departure of the middle class families in search of resorts which were not in the reach of the excursionists and the working class holiday makers especially during workers’ holidays.

In light of the role the railway companies played in bringing workers to Skegness, it seems safe to say that the railways changed Skegness from a health resort into a working-class pleasure playground. This was despite its remoteness, as there were remote resorts, such as in East Anglia, West Wales, and the West Country, that managed to preserve their exclusivity and which remained exclusive because of their remoteness.⁷⁴ On the contrary, Skegness was appropriated by the working class. It became their holiday sphere and their zone of escape from the factory system and routine, something which was clear through the spread of working-class amusements in this resort.

One main aspect of the transformation of Skegness into a working-class seaside resort related to working class amusements and patterns of consumption which adapted to the needs of the new visitors and showed the attempts to profit from mass tourism. In this regard, this era saw the spread of fish and chips restaurants in Skegness. Though it was a major component of the working class diet, the new fast food of the early years of the twentieth century became a main feature of working class popular culture.⁷⁵ Referring to the spread of the fish and chips trade in Skegness, Winston Kime ironically pointed to the possibility of naming Skegness High Street Dyson’s Street after the Oldham trader who started the fish and chips ‘industry’ in England.⁷⁶ This was concomitant with the spread of huts on the beach selling tea, beer, coconut, and shellfish as part of an overall attempt to adapt to the changing socio-economic profile of holidaymakers.

Amusements could be used to decipher the transformation of the resort from a health resort into a working-class playground. The resort amusements were among the

parameters Harold Perkin mentioned for the classification of seaside resorts. For Perkin, there should be a distinction between amusements like indoor baths, classical concerts, art galleries, and museums, and amusements like brass bands, donkey and pony rides, beach entertainers, and catch penny amusements.⁷⁷

A comparison of publicity of the early stages of resort development with those of the second half of the twentieth century revealed a shift towards amusements as the main attractions of Skegness. Guidebooks changed their shift from the resort natural landscape in tune with the visitors' quest for health to the resort open air amusements like donkey rides, shooting galleries, gambling, festivals, galas, gambling, and bingos. Similarly, there was a major change towards the artificial and the show type. Skegness was converted in the guidebooks of the second half of the twentieth century into a giant theme park. This could be noticed through the changes in guidebook captions, which considered Skegness to be "*Britain's Famous Holiday Playground*" (1963), the "*passport to pleasure*" (1978), or the "*giant theme park with non-stop fun*" (1981). These captions replaced the focus on the health dimension of Skegness in most references to Skegness both in directories and early guidebooks of Skegness.

The importance of Skegness as a health seaside resort declined sharply with the transformation of Skegness into a working-class pleasure resort with the inflow of working-class excursionists to the resorts. This change was the result of the inflow of excursionists, and at the same time the growing popularity of biomedicine and the success of technology and laboratories from the mid-nineteenth century⁷⁸ which affected the image of seaside resorts as health destinations. Nevertheless, "*the healing power of nature*"⁷⁹ has recently come to the limelight with the renewed emphasis on seaside resorts as sites for wellness and health maintenance.

Skegness: A potential wellness resort

Skegness, in light of the changes in the tourism industry, seems well situated to benefit from wellness tourism. The stress on the development of wellness tourism in Skegness derives from the development of a new type of tourism worldwide which seeks to attract tourists seeking wellness. This type of tourism promotes physical exercise, intellectual development and relaxation which should lead to a balanced body, a relaxed mind and a better spirit.⁸⁰ It is difficult to define wellness tourism. *Oxford English Dictionary* defines wellness as the

the state or condition of being well or in good health, in contrast to being ill; the absence of sickness; the state of (full or temporary) recovery from illness or injury [and] the state or condition of being in good physical, mental, and spiritual health, esp. as an actively pursued goal; well-being.⁸¹

As it might appear from this definition, wellness is all-inclusive. It encompasses the mental, the physical and the spiritual. This definition is in tune with Kelly's definition who considered wellness as the result of "*a balance between wellbeing in the body, the mind and the spirit*".⁸² Similarly, for Edward H. Huijbens (2011), the difference between health and wellness lies mainly in the fact that the former is a state of being while the latter is defined by its purpose which is the improvement of the state of the body, the soul and the mind.⁸³

Wellness tourism, however, is considered as a "*subset of health tourism*".⁸⁴ Sometimes, it has to do with other activities not necessarily related to treatment, but with a purpose of

maintaining health. As a result, activities like physical exercise, massage, consumption of healthy food, were considered wellness activities.⁸⁵ This type of tourism is considered a niche market at the global level,⁸⁶ which is gaining momentum.

Wellness tourism could regenerate Skegness and seaside resorts facing major economic problems which is the case of most seaside resorts in Britain.⁸⁷ Stephen J. Page et al., (2017) stressed the way wellness tourism could boost the fortunes of declining seaside resorts. They highlighted in particular the way the old mass tourism seaside resorts could develop into wellness destinations by combining both health and pleasure. They focused in particular on the way well-being tourism should be used to regenerate old seaside resorts especially through the development of small businesses, mainly those meant for health maintenance or promotion, which should combine both well-being and health which would in turn boost the economy of the UK coastal resorts.⁸⁸

The UK government's wellness strategy and the potential transformation of Skegness into a wellness resort

Time seems opportune for the transformation of Skegness into a wellness resort especially with the central government and the NHS's emphasis on wellness as a way to prevent diseases. This was stressed in the 2018 government health vision which highlighted prevention as the government health approach. Matt Hancock, Health and Social Care Secretary, outlined this vision in his foreword to the government document on health and social care, in which he considered prevention as the best way to save lives.⁸⁹ The new recurrent message is *"one of being, or becoming more 'well' and, by implication, fitter, happier, and more productive"*.⁹⁰ Despite the constant decline of preventive health spending to local governments from 2009,⁹¹ the discourse related to wellness continued to rank high on the government health policy agenda.

The transformation of Skegness into a wellness resort could be facilitated by the need of employers (business, industry, government) to control the cost of health care services by opting for strategies that would help them prevent diseases or reduce stress levels among employees.⁹² This is a major change in comparison with the era of the Industrial Revolution when holidays were considered a preparation for a new cycle of work, a relief from work and a short term recovery, while the new challenge is to *"keep the workers fit and productive"*⁹³ to prepare them for long term endurance. This change was clear even within the NHS especially with the growth of NHS Trusts among the employees of many healthy establishments under the NHS that stressed wellness among employees. For example, York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust started a project that was meant to reduce absences from work, prevent diseases and ensure immediate intervention, which was part of an overarching program meant to 'manage staff health and wellbeing' and an all-inclusive approach to health which took into consideration aspects like lifestyles and environments as factors impacting on employees.⁹⁴ This was the case with other NHS Trusts like South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, whose main objective was *"to reduce the stress its staff were feeling within the workplace and to increase staff happiness and wellbeing so that they could continue to provide the best care for patients"*.⁹⁵

Skegness could benefit from the Wellbeing Saturdays organised by the NHS Trusts for its employees by offering tourist services meant to boost the wellbeing of visitors seeking

relaxation and physical activity.⁹⁶ This could then be extended beyond this institution to other companies and institutions on a national basis. Skegness local Council could invest in wellness holidays in the fashion of the weekend and off-season holidays which developed in England in the 1980s and 1990s. This could be done in direct partnership with local governments who are now responsible for preventive healthcare or with local NHS Trusts, especially as some Trusts started initiatives with councils like Nottingham City Council to develop cycling initiatives and at the same times arrange events, like the National Bike Week, which were generally meant to encourage physical activity and boost the wellness of the employees.⁹⁷ Wellness holidays could give a boost to Skegness especially out of the traditional summer holidays. This, however, does not preclude the fact that Skegness and other resorts in Britain need to cope with major challenges like competitive destinations abroad where holidays are cheaper, facilities better, and especially a more salubrious weather.

Skegness local Council and the East Lindsey District Council could play a pivotal role in changing Skegness, in cooperation with local authorities, into a wellness destination especially with the increasing emphasis on the role of the latter in the development of appropriate health strategies. This was clear in the 2010 address by the Secretary of State for Health who focused on localism that was considered at the core of the new health care system. In this regard, he stated that *“by giving local government control of public health resources, we will shift power and accountability to local communities and create healthy places with new partnerships in important areas”*,⁹⁸ which will help in addressing major problems such as depression and other health problems. This could be facilitated by the establishment of the wellbeing boards which should bring in the expertise of the NHS and public health leaders in each area to better address the health needs in each area.⁹⁹

Skegness could be a prospective site for wellness tourism especially with the steady flow of the elderly to the resort. This is very relevant to Skegness which has seen a constant flow of elderly people to the resort from the late twentieth century and continued into the twenty first century. The percentage of people aged over sixty-five, among the residents of Skegness, was found in a study by Jane Atterton above the national level. This age category made 22.2 per cent of the population of Skegness in comparison with 16 per cent at the national level. The situation was similar in the early twenty first century in other coastal resorts. For example, the median age in coastal communities was higher than the median age in Great Britain in 2001 and comprehensibly the percentage of the elderly in coastal towns was higher than their percentage in Great Britain and made almost one quarter of the total population of coastal towns.¹⁰⁰

Skegness local authorities even called on old people to visit the resort. This was clear in a guide book of the late twentieth century (1995) where the language used seemed to avoid the use of the word old or elderly possibly in a bid to appeal to this age category. According to a 1995 guidebook:

Skegness has a reputation as a resort for all the family and the young and not so young are all catered for here. The popularity of the resort to the less able is obvious. The flatness makes it an ideal resort to everyone, there are gardens to explore, a quiet game for of bowls, the model village to delight the eye, and of course the numerous cafes to relax in and watch the world go by. Come and enjoy a well-earned rest.¹⁰¹

As it might appear from this passage, it is true that there was a call to old people to visit the resort, but the problem is that the facilities and the recreations offered do not make of Skegness a place for people seeking health maintenance or wellbeing. In this regard, it

seems sound to say that Skegness local authorities need to develop wellness facilities that could further boost the movement of old tourists to the resort.

Skegness Council should support the development of facilities like all-weather entertainment and wellness centres, clinics and even local clubs with wellness objectives, which could help in attracting tourists seeking wellness, in particular among the elderly generation, especially as the government's new health strategy seeks to prevent and manage physical and mental problems of an ageing population, which is expected to double by 2031 and should consequently pose serious challenges to local authority and NHS resources.¹⁰² In this regard, the Ministry of Health and the NHS have started promoting active ageing as a new strategy to prevent health problems, which according to the State Secretary of Health should be "*the norm rather than the exception*".¹⁰³ This is, according to the Ministry of Health, part of an overarching strategy in which public health will be integrated with other areas like leisure so as to keep people "*active and reduce isolation*".¹⁰⁴

Skegness, local authorities and the NHS should benefit from a partnership that should promote wellbeing of an elderly generation and at the same time regenerate Skegness. This is a need because the NHS is under continuing pressure to cater for the needs of an ageing population.

The local government and the NHS are faced with challenges related to the health needs of an ageing population whose health needs are increasing. In this regard, the local government and the NHS need to be more proactive as admitting people in hospitals would definitely cost more in comparison with the preventive measures that could lessen the financial burdens of medical treatment as the number of people aged 75 or above is expected to double by 2031.¹⁰⁵

The location and the environs of Skegness make of this resort an ideal wellness destination for different age categories. The neighbouring Fens, the bracing air of Skegness, and the seaside could be re-packaged to attract tourists seeking fresh air, a space for physical exercise and relaxation. According to Page et al. (2017),

The natural attributes of the coast and its association with healthy living can now be repackaged and rediscovered within the wellness paradigm by tourism entrepreneurs. Coastal resorts have many natural advantages that can be harnessed with well-being linked to tourism so as to attract the increasingly ageing populations of the new millennia, many of whom may rediscover the coast in a new age.¹⁰⁶

The health attributes of the coast have been given further momentum with studies which associated between the coast and better health. For example, a 2012 study by the European Centre for Environment and Human Health found that people who live close to the sea were more likely to be in good health even in the most deprived areas. Research by the same Centre recommended the coast for stress relief.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, analysis of the 2011 census found that some seaside resort, like Sussex for example, had more centenarians than anywhere in Britain and the sea air was considered as the secret for longevity.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, Skegness and other coastal resorts need to develop new strategies of regeneration that stress health maintenance and wellness in seaside resorts. This is relevant despite the ongoing calls to make towns and the urban environment in general people-friendly, a quest which remains unaccomplished at least in the near future.¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, the transformation of the old seaside resorts into wellness destinations is not without challenges. For example, the changing of old tourist installations, mainly

hotels, into wellness facilities is a daunting task especially as the accommodation sector, has so far failed to respond to the needs of a new clientele who found in resorts in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean state of the art facilities and hence they had higher expectations of local tourist resorts. This is mainly because of the heavy costs of restructuring and partly because of the lack of initiative or what Andrew Clegg considered as “inertia”¹¹⁰ Yet, Skegness could change from a mass tourism destination centred on the notion of escape involving hedonism and all the attendant pursuits into a wellness destination focused mainly on stress relief, physical activity and personal development.

Conclusion

Skegness started as a destination for health, but the inflow of the excursionists and the developments in medicine changed the place into a destination for excursionists seeking escape from work through pleasure. However, with the changes in tourism and local and national government health strategies, the resort could benefit from a better infrastructure which should cater for a new type of tourists seeking escape, recreation, spiritual and physical wellbeing.

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ABSTRACTS

This article seeks to demonstrate the vitality of the health dimension in the growth of Skegness as a seaside resort. It shows the way changes in the medical profession, especially the use of seawaters for the treatment of diseases, contributed to the growth of seaside resorts in Britain. It highlights the way the health culture interacted with the principle of pleasure to contribute to the growth of seaside resorts. This paper also seeks to explore the potential role the National Health Service (NHS) could play in the transformation of Skegness into a wellness destination especially with the NHS emphasis on wellness as a new strategy to prevent and manage health problems, the constant inflow of an elderly generation into the resort, and an ageing population whose health needs are changing.

Cet article cherche à démontrer la vitalité de la dimension santé en tant que facteur déterminant dans le développement de Skegness en une station balnéaire. Il montre la façon dont les changements dans la profession médicale ont contribué à la croissance des stations balnéaires en Grande-Bretagne, particulièrement l'utilisation des eaux marines dans le traitement des maladies. Il met en relief la manière dont la culture sanitaire a interagit avec le principe du plaisir pour concourir à la croissance des stations balnéaires en Grande Bretagne. Cet article cherche également à examiner le rôle potentiel que le système de soins (NHS) pourrait jouer dans la transformation de Skegness en une destination de bien-être, tenant compte surtout de l'accent mis par le NHS sur le bien-être en tant que nouvelle stratégie de prévention et de gestion des problèmes de santé, sur l'afflux constant de personnes âgées dans les stations balnéaires et une population vieillissante dont les besoins en matière de santé évoluent sans cesse.

INDEX

Mots-clés: stations balnéaires, plaisir, NHS, vieillissement, tourisme de bien-être.

Keywords: health resorts, pleasure, NHS, ageing, wellness tourism

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